

South Street Seaport Museum,
Harriet Onderdonk Building
(Meyer's Hotel)
116-119 South Street, corner of South
Street and Peck Slip
New York City
New York County
New York

HABS No. NY-5681

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM,
HARRIET ONDERDONK BUILDING
(Meyer's Hotel)

HABS No. NY-5681

Location: 116-119 South Street,
Corner of South Street and Peck Slip,
New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: South Front Realty.

Present Occupant: Paris Bar and Restaurant, Meyer's Hotel.
Fishery Council.

Present Use: Bar and restaurant, rooming house, offices.

Significance: Presently known as Meyer's Hotel, this double brick building was designed by the prominent New York architect John B. Snook in 1873 for Mrs. Harriet S. Onderdonk and Mrs. H. L. Mann. Ten years later Mrs. Onderdonk sold the stores to Henry L. Meyer, liquor merchant who probably installed the Victorian carved bar that stands in the Paris Bar today. In 1903, Meyer converted the buildings' upper stories into small hotel rooms, now inhabited by retired fish-mongers.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1873. New building application #369 (1873), submitted to the Buildings Department on May 7, 1873, states that the building was completed on December 23, 1873.
2. Architect: John Butler Snook (1815-1901). Snook was one of the most renowned New York City architects in the late nineteenth century. Born in England, he came to America in infancy. As a child, he was apprenticed to a builder. He started in business as a contractor; but soon devoted himself to designing buildings. Some of his major buildings include the original Grand Central Station, All Angels Church, the Stewart Building and the residence of Commodore Vanderbilt and those of his daughters.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The building was constructed on Block 97E, lots 1, 1 1/4, and 1 1/2, replacing two earlier buildings, 44 Peck Slip and 117 South Street. By 1851 the lot was simply designated Lot 1. Information for the following chain of title comes from the New York City Conveyance Records, Surrogate's Court.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
May 28, 1845 Liber 459, p. 579	William P. and Mary Mott William and Eleanor Mott	Robert W. Mott (44 Peck Slip, 117 South Street)
July 8, 1873 Liber 1265, p. 137	Mary Esther Jones	Harriet Onderdonk (Assignment)
April 30, 1883 Liber 1732, p. 213	Harriet S. Onderdonk	Henry L. Meyers (\$87,000)
Liber 1732, p. 217	Weeks W. Culver Nelson, Chase, et al Defendant	Harriet S. Onderdonk
Liber 1732, p. 219	Robert W. Mott (Harriet S. Onderdonk, Executrix)	Henry L. Meyers (Property sold to satisfy debts existing against the estate of Robert W. Mott)
July 16, 1886 Liber 1988, p. 1	James W.) Lydia T.) Mott Susan F.) William P.) Jones Mary F. William) Mott Eleanor	Robert W. Mott (Quit Claim)
March 1, 1888 Liber 2124, p. 23	Henry L. Meyers	Otto J. Schmedes (\$87,000)
March 1, 1888 Liber 2124, p. 97	Otto F. and Mary E. A. Schmedes	Henry L. Meyers
June 25, 1951 Liber 4735, p. 492	Henrietta L. Meyer (Exr. of)	South Front Realty Corp.

4. Original plans and construction: A South Street facade elevation drawing by Snook shows a preliminary version of the "stores" he designed for Mrs. H. S. Onderdonk and Mrs. H. L. Mann. While the elevation drawing shows only four stories, the height was amended to five stories before construction. The elevation shows a Philadelphia brick double building with front gable, cast-iron window lintels and sills and two cast-iron storefronts which consisted of thirteen cast-iron posts, each with a granite base. The New Building Application #369 (1873) states that the builder was John Banta (Mason) and the carpenter was George W. Springstead. The building cost \$30,000.
5. Alterations and additions: An 1879 print, "Panorama of New York, Brooklyn and Vicinity" published by Wittemann in New York (see Early Views), shows a canopy (wooden?) over the first story of the corner store. This addition, or a version of it remains today. At some early time a diagonal entrance was installed at the corner.

In 1903, Henry L. Meyer applied for a permit No. 240 to change 117 South Street from "stores, offices and lofts" to stores offices and boarding house." Before the alterations, the building contained a restaurant on the first floor and loft on the second floor. The third floor was vacant and the fourth and fifth floors served as lofts. After the alterations, there was a bar and restaurant on the first floor, offices on the second, and a total of forty-one hotel rooms on the upper three floors.

The next major alteration took place in 1953 after South Front Realty Company had purchased the building from Henrietta L. Meyer in 1951. The architect, M. L. Mongiello, converted the second floor from offices into barber lockers, added new toilets on the first, third, fourth, and fifth floors, removed and installed new partitions, installed fireproof windows at exits, repaired fire escapes and installed a sprinkler system. The number of small hotel rooms remained the same, 41.

It is unknown when the elaborate carved Victorian bar was installed on the first floor. Most probably, it is either original or dates from 1883, when Henry L. Meyer, liquor merchant, bought the building.

B. Historical Context:

While Mrs. Harriet S. Onderdonk owned the double building from 1873 until 1883, its only known use was termed "stores" (noted on building permit). Existing hoistways suggest that the upper floors could have been used as lofts. A Perris & Browne insurance map of 1875 shows the building was in the special hazards category; this means certain businesses could have been there most probably a brewery or bakery.

When Henry L. Meyer bought the stores from Mrs. Onderdonk, he opened a bar in the first story; he already had other waterfront bars on Front and Pearl Streets. In addition, he used the upper stories as office and loft space.

Although the building is generally known as Meyer's Hotel, it did not attain this identity until 1903. The tiny rooms now serve as residences for retired fishmongers.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

See accompanying HABS photographs of the structure for a visual observation.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early views:

Preliminary Elevation Drawing of 116-119 South St. by John B. Snook (1873), available at the Print Room of the New York Historical Society, New York City.

An 1879 print from Panorama of New York, Brooklyn and Vicinity: Published and copyrighted by Wittemann Bros., New York, from the Prints and Photographs Collection of the Library of Congress.

An 1897 photograph, "East River, N.Y." shows 116-119 South St. at the extreme right. Photograph by A. Loeffler, New York, from the Prints and Photographs Collection of the Library of Congress.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

New York City Conveyance Records, Surrogate's Court.

New York City Department of Buildings, Municipal Building, New Building Application #369 (1873); Alteration Application #240 (1903); #754 (1953), plans available.

Roberts, Lee and Steinke, Nancy, "Inventory of Structures in the Brooklyn Bridge S.E. Urban Renewal Area," New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, May 1968, p. 17.

Rosebrock, Ellen. "South Street Seaport Historic District," New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1974.

New York Historical Society: John B. Snook Collection.

Charles R. Bierce, Term Paper on Meyer's Hotel, courtesy Ellen Rosebrock, South Street Seaport Museum.

Zabar, Morgan, Toroncuk, Kaplan, Fetterman, "Meyer's Hotel Re-Use Report," Courtesy Paul Byard, Columbia University.

2, Secondary and published sources:

American Architect and Building News, "John B. Snook Obituary,"
V. 74, Nov. 9, 1901, p. 41.

Rosebrock, Ellen, "John B. Snook and Meyer's Hotel, 116-119 South
Street," South Street Reporter, Maritime Library, 205 Front St.

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Summer 1976

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The South Street Seaport project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, with the co-operation of the South Street Seaport Museum, Inc. Recording was carried out during the summer of 1976 by Frederick W. Wiedenmann (HABS Washington, D.C. office) project supervisor; Lori Zabar (Columbia University), project historian; Robert Lee Wiltse (Louisiana State University), architect; and student architects-Barry Lee Gill (North Dakota State University), Joe E. Price (Texas Tech University), and John R. Temmink (University of Virginia). Susan McCown, a HABS historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for transmittal to the Library of Congress. Walter Smalling, Jr. of the National Park Service took the photographs of the South Street Seaport structures.